**My CancerIQ – Q&A For Health Care Providers**

**What is My CancerIQ?**

My CancerIQ is a free and confidential online cancer risk assessment tool to help Ontarians of all ages:

* increase their awareness of developing six types of cancer (i.e., breast, cervical, colorectal, kidney, lung and melanoma)
* better understand their cancer risk and protective factors
* learn when and how they should be screened for breast, cervical and colorectal cancer

**How does My CancerIQ calculate a patient’s risk?**

The risk assessments are based on existing algorithms developed through an extensive international consultation process involving clinicians and scientists. Algorithms are adapted by using prevalence data from Ontario or, if no Ontario estimates were available, from Canada or another Canadian province.

The messaging for personalized health action plan was developed by inter-disciplinary working groups, including epidemiologists, cancer science specialists, a registered dietitian and health promotion/communication specialists.

For each cancer, the algorithm calculates the relative risk of cancer compared to the general population. For most cancers, risk was divided into three broad categories: lower than average, average, or higher than average. For some cancers, additional categories, such as high risk, were added to reflect the substantial impact of particular risk factors (e.g., having a genetic mutation for breast cancer or heavy smoking for lung cancer).

Because risk is calculated relative to the Ontario population and using methods specific to Ontario, risk categories assigned to users may differ from those obtained through other available online risk calculators.

A Disclaimer on the site explains to users that results:

* are not diagnostic and cannot predict whether an individual will or will not develop cancer
* do not constitute medical advice
* are most accurate for those age 40 and over without a previous history of cancer
* are limited to current knowledge and user’s responses, so risk may change in the future

How were the risk factors identified?

For each risk assessment, risk factors were included based on a review of scientific evidence by researchers and clinicians. Many of these factors have also been reviewed in one or more of the following reports/report series:

* *Diet, Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Cancer: a Global Perspective,* published by the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF) and the American Institute for Cancer Research (AICR)
* *Global Cancer Update Programme*, published by the World Cancer Research Fund (WCRF)
* *IARC Monograph on the Identification of Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans*, published by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)

For each of the included risk factors, the relative risk of cancer has been estimated. The relative risk represents the size of the association between different levels of exposure to the risk factor and the related cancer. These numbers were identified and agreed upon by a large group of scientific experts based on the available science.

**How were the Ontario prevalence estimates obtained?**

Risk calculations in the cancer risk assessments were adapted to reflect the proportion of the Ontario population exposed to each of the included risk factors (i.e., the prevalence). Wherever possible, prevalence estimates were obtained for each sex separately from population-based surveys or studies and the most recent data available were used. If Ontario estimates were not available, estimates for Canada or another Canadian province were used.

Risk categories assigned by My CancerIQ are relative to the population of Ontario and uses Ontario-specific data and cut-offs, as determined by the expert working group. Other online cancer risk calculators may use data from other populations or studies or use different cut-offs to determine risk level. As a result, outcomes may vary between different calculators.

**Does My CancerIQ consider race and/or ethnicity as part of the risk calculations?**

At this time, the evidence from studies that support the risk algorithms generally does not consider race and/or ethnicity across My CancerIQ risk assessments. Currently, the My CancerIQ breast cancer risk assessment includes Ashkenazi Jewish descent as a risk factor because there is substantial evidence indicating that individuals of Ashkenazi Jewish descent are more likely to have a genetic variant that can increase the risk of breast cancer. We will continue to monitor studies for race and/or ethnicity as potential risk factors to include within My CancerIQ risk assessments.

**Does My CancerIQ use gender-inclusive language when describing risks and population estimates?**

My CancerIQ is being updated to use gender-neutral terms, such as "people" or "sibling," where applicable. However, gender-binary language may still be used in cases where it reflects the population described in the risk factor evidence.

**What are the sources of the screening recommendations used on the site?**

Where screening is recommended, the information is based on the best available evidence and reflects the guidelines of:

* [ColonCancerCheck](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/colorectal/screening), an evidence-based, province-wide, population-based colorectal cancer screening program.
* [Ontario Breast Screening Program (OBSP)](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/breast-cancer/screening), a province-wide, evidence-based, organized breast cancer screening program.
* [Ontario Cervical Screening Program (OCSP)](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/types-of-cancer/cervical/screening), a province-wide, evidence-based, organized screening program for eligible people with a cervix.

More information about Ontario’s cancer screening programs can also be found in the [2023 Ontario Cancer Screening Performance Report](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancer-care-ontario/programs/screening-programs/cancer-screening-performance-report-2023).

For other forms of cancer, recommendations are based on diagnostic pathways developed for and by Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) by leading experts in the field.

**How were links to outside resources selected?**

Links to outside websites and resources were chosen to help Ontarians obtain more information or advice. Websites were chosen that:

* Are operated by Canadian governments or not-for-profit organizations
* Provide balanced, evidence-based information to support and not replace the doctor-patient relationship
* Are transparent in their purpose and funding and post the means by which they protect the privacy of users
* Wherever possible, provide resources in both official languages

**How can completing a cancer risk assessment benefit my patient?**

Completing a risk assessment will:

* **educate** your patients about cancer, cancer screening (if appropriate), and their own cancer risk and protective factors
* encourage patients to **engage** with their healthcare providers and to start dialogues on cancer prevention and screening
* **motivate** your patients to make healthy behaviour change

At numerous points throughout the risk assessment, users are encouraged to share their risk assessment report with their doctor or nurse practitioner. These primary care providers are positioned as the preferred source of information on cancer prevention and screening.

**Why should I encourage my patients to complete a cancer risk assessment?**

Encouraging your patients to complete one or more cancer risk assessments can:

* provide a means (the cancer risk assessment report) by which patients can document information (e.g., lifestyle risk factors or family history) to share with you
* help to open the door to productive dialogues on cancer prevention and screening
* educate your patients on appropriate cancer screening practices
* support patients in making healthy lifestyle changes (e.g., physical activity, healthy eating, smoking cessation) by linking patients to high-quality resources

**What topics are covered by the website?**

The My CancerIQ site addresses:

* cancer-specific risk and protective factors
* evidence-based screening guidelines for colorectal, cervical and breast cancer

Through links on the site, users have access to high-quality, bilingual resources providing:

* general cancer information (e.g., the Canadian Cancer Society)
* information and interactive resources for behaviour change (e.g., UnlockFood.ca)
* information on screening ([Ontario Breast Screening Program](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancer-care-ontario/programs/screening-programs/ontario-breast-obsp), [Ontario Cervical Screening Program](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancer-care-ontario/programs/screening-programs/ontario-cervical), [ColonCancerCheck Program](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancer-care-ontario/programs/screening-programs/colon-cancer-check-colorectal-screening" \t "_blank))

**What topics are not covered?**

My CancerIQ does not discuss cancer diagnosis, treatment or recovery. Although messages are tailored to reflect users’ responses to assessment questions, personal medical information or advice is not provided.

**How is my patient’s information protected?**

We take patient privacy seriously. If patients sign up to receive email updates, we will never share their email addresses with third parties.

Patients’ answers are retained while they take an assessment but deleted as soon as they end their browser session. Patients may choose to save, email or print their results, but this data will not be stored anywhere on our servers and we will not be able to see it.

Patients who complete our feedback survey will not be asked for any information that could be used to identify them and their answers.

For more information on how we keep patient information safe, please refer to our [Legal & Privacy](https://www.mycanceriq.ca/About/Legal) page.

[Learn more about the collection of users’ assessment answers](https://www.mycanceriq.ca/About/FAQ#privacy)*.*

**Why are the recommendations on alcohol consumption different from the 2023 *Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health*?**

The recommendations on My CancerIQ reflect evidence on alcohol consumption for each specific type of cancer and only that cancer.

The 2023 *Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health* was developed using relative risk estimates of premature all-cause mortality among those who drink, compared to non-drinking people, as well as premature mortality from 21 well-established causes of injuries and diseases associated with alcohol consumption, including stroke, motor vehicle accidents, and some forms of cancer.

*Canada’s Guidance on Alcohol and Health* presents a continuum of risk associated with weekly alcohol use where the risk of alcohol-related harm is likely avoided by consuming 2 standard drinks or less per week. The Canadian Cancer Society recommends that to reduce cancer risk, it is best not to consume alcohol, however, if one chooses to drink then limit this to 2 standard drinks or less per week.

**Where can I find links to resources?**

Visit the [Helpful Links](https://www.mycanceriq.ca/About/HelpfulLinks) page to see sites recommended to your patients.

**Is there a print version I can give to my patients?**

No, the algorithm is too complex to offer in a print version.

**Does Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) have additional resources about cancer screening or guidelines for primary care providers?**

Visit Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario)’s [Primary Care](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancer-care-ontario/programs/primary-care) page to find out about our resources for primary care practitioners. Other cancer related resources include:

* [Breast Screening Guidelines Summary](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/cancer-continuum/screening/breast-screening-guidelines-summary)
* [Colorectal Screening Guidelines Summary](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/cancer-continuum/screening/resources-healthcare-providers/colorectal-cancer-screening-summary)
* [Cervical Screening Guidelines Summary](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/cancer-continuum/screening/resources-healthcare-providers/cervical-screening-guidelines-summary)
* [Register for Screening Activity Reports](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/treatment-modality/primary-care/screening-activity-report)
* [Drug Formulary](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/cancer-treatments/chemotherapy/drug-formulary)
* [Managing Symptom, Side Effects & Well-Being](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/symptom-management)

An extensive list of resources for primary care providers, including screening and referral guidelines, disease pathway maps, colorectal cancer follow-up guidelines and symptom management and palliative care resources can be found [here](https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/resources-primary-care-providers).